



Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

No 386 2 December 2015 30p/80p

www.workersliberty.org

UK-US BOMBING WON'T STOP DAESH



See page 5

Solidarity with the Kurds

Join Labour! Join Young Labour!

What is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty?

Today one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production. Society is shaped by the capitalists' relentless drive to increase their wealth. Capitalism causes poverty, unemployment, the blighting of lives by overwork, imperialism, the destruction of the environment and much else.

Against the accumulated wealth and power of the capitalists, the working class has one weapon: solidarity.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty aims to build solidarity through struggle so that the working class can overthrow capitalism. We want socialist revolution: collective ownership of industry and services, workers' control and a democracy much fuller than the present system, with elected representatives recallable at any time and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

We fight for the labour movement to break with "social partnership" and assert working-class interests militantly against the bosses.

Our priority is to work in the workplaces and trade unions, supporting workers' struggles, producing workplace bulletins, helping organise rank-and-file groups.

We are also active among students and in many campaigns and alliances.

We stand for:

- Independent working-class representation in politics.
- A workers' government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.
- A workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, and to take solidarity action.
- Taxation of the rich to fund decent public services, homes, education and jobs for all.
- A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression. Full equality for women and social provision to free women from the burden of housework. Free abortion on request. Full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Black and white workers' unity against racism.
- Open borders.
- Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers.
- Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation.
- Working-class solidarity in international politics: equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small.
- Maximum left unity in action, and openness in debate.
- If you agree with us, please take some copies of *Solidarity* to sell — and join us!

Contact us:

● 020 7394 8923 ● solidarity@workersliberty.org

The editor (Cathy Nugent), 20e Tower Workshops, Riley Road, London, SE1 3DG.

● Printed by Trinity Mirror

Get Solidarity every week!

- Trial sub, 6 issues £5 ☐
- 22 issues (six months). £18 waged ☐
£9 unwaged ☐
- 44 issues (year). £35 waged ☐
£17 unwaged ☐
- European rate: 28 euros (22 issues) ☐
or 50 euros (44 issues) ☐

Tick as appropriate above and send your money to:
20e Tower Workshops, Riley Road, London, SE1 3DG
Cheques (£) to "AWL".

Or make £ and euro payments at workersliberty.org/sub.

Name

Address

I enclose £



SNP attack Labour from the right

Scotland
By Ann Field



Thanks to the Labour Party, tens or hundreds of thousands of families in Scotland would be worse off as a result of the Tories' tax credit cuts. And the Labour Party's campaign against those cuts was "disingenuous".

That was the line adopted by the SNP and its activists in response to the Tories' plans — now abandoned — to slash the working tax credits introduced by the last Labour government!

The SNP propaganda stunt was that the SNP had moved an amendment to the Scotland Bill under which power over tax credits would have been devolved to Holyrood. Because Labour voted against this they are to blame for the cuts going ahead in Scotland. Yet the amendment would have been defeated even if Labour had voted for it.

Flag-waving posturing is a matter of necessity for the SNP: Its nationalist scapegoating of Labour serves to divert attention away from its own sorry record.

In its general election campaign the SNP promised: "The only way to lock out the Tories and force Labour back to its roots is to vote SNP."

The electorate in Scotland did vote, in large numbers,

for the SNP. But this did not result in the Tories being "locked out" of Downing Street. On the contrary, they walked back in with an absolute majority.

The primary blame for that lies with the inadequacies of Labour, but the SNP gave the Tories a helping hand as well. They did everything possible to oppose the election of a majority Labour government: Vote SNP in Scotland, Plaid Cymru in Wales, and Green in England — anyone but Labour! And the nationalist nature of the SNP election campaign was used by the Tories to successfully appeal to English nationalism.

HYPOCRITICAL

The SNP's vague and tired cliché about "forcing Labour back to its roots" has also turned out to be just so much hypocritical and empty verbiage.

Labour has elected Corbyn as its leader. Its policy on the Tories' anti-union laws is well to the left of that of the SNP. And the Scottish Labour Party (SLP) conference passed policy opposing TTIP and Trident renewal.

So, is the SNP is now welcoming Labour "going back to its roots"? Anything but!

The SLP vote to oppose Trident renewal was supposedly meaningless. The party at national level has not changed its policy. And even if it did, runs the SNP argument, it would not matter as the Tories are the



SNP leader Nicola Sturgeon during the general election

majority in Westminster.

When Corbyn rightly spoke out against a general "shoot to kill" policy, the SNP — in the form of Stewart Hosie MSP, who was once on the "left" of the SNP — attacked Corbyn from the right.

The upsurge of support for Corbyn and his politics is dismissed by the SNP as Labour in-fighting.

Of course there is in-fighting in the Labour Party. It could not "go back to its roots" without some in-fighting.

The truth is the SNP prefers Labour to be led by people with the politics of Jim Murphy. Those politics are disastrous for the labour movement, but a boon to the SNP.

Responses "on the streets" to street-campaigning by the Scottish Labour Party — against the Trade Union Bill two months ago, against tax credit cuts last month — underline the continuing success of the SNP's political dishonesty and its

evasion of political accountability. "Labour are Red Tories" they said. And the election of Jeremy Corbyn as party leader? Just a con-trick to try and fool people in Scotland!

HOLYROOD

At Holyrood itself SNP MSPs and party leader Nicola Sturgeon now routinely treat First Minister's Questions with the same contempt that Tories treat Prime Minister's Questions in Westminster.

When the SLP argued that new devolved powers should be used to restore tax credit cuts and that the SNP policy of cutting Airport Passenger Duty be dumped, Sturgeon evaded the issues.

Her response was that "there was little chance of Labour ever being in a position to implement them (i.e. its policy proposals)."

The truth of the matter is that the SNP has no strategy to fight the Tory government and their narrow nationalism cuts across efforts to build anti-Tory mobilisations at an all-British level — exemplified by their meaningless Westminster amendment that the Trade Union Bill should not apply to Scotland. The same nationalism leads them to attack the Labour Party and Labour Party campaigning — backed by trade unions — against the Tories.

The SNP's success in the general election has not been a success for the working class. Socialist activists need to take a lead in pushing for the SLP and the trade unions to pursue a policy of confrontation, not just with the Tories but with the SNP as well.

Our answer to the Tory attacks on our class is not another referendum at some undefined point in the future.

It is self-organisation, defiance and confrontation in the here and now — and not just in Scotland.



By Becky Crocker

I marched with 500 women as part of Sisters Uncut's 'funeral march' on 28 November.

Wearing black and chanting, 'they cut, we bleed', we stopped traffic in central London and dyed Trafalgar

Square's fountains blood red. We commemorated the 32 domestic violence services closed by cuts between 2010 and 2014 and further closures in 2015, such as the Jagonari and the Eaves women's centres. Most domestic violence services are funded by local authorities. George Osborne's

25 November announcement of 56% cuts by central to local government will place even more services at risk of closure.

Sisters Uncut is urgently setting up a campaign to save a domestic violence service in Portsmouth. If you can help, please email sistersuncut@gmail.com

How councillors could fight the cuts

By Martin Thomas

Councils lost about a quarter of their funding during the 2010-15 Tory and Lib-Dem coalition government.

Now they face the same order of attack again. Libraries, social care, and all community services beyond the minimum councils are legally compelled to do face further chops.

Either Labour finds a new approach, or Labour councils will be reduced even more to local administrators of the Tories' demolition job on our communities.

Discussions and debates in local Momentum meetings have showed majorities saying that Labour councillors should refuse to make cuts, defy the Tories' plans, and help mobilise the labour movement and the community to defeat them.

Many new activists are keen on defiance; but few councillors. The first demand, over the next weeks and months, should be that council Labour groups submit their plans to democratic local labour movement conferences.

Those conferences can both rally forces for local anti-cuts campaigns, and convince or push councillors to make a stand,

After the Tories came back to office in 2010, at first some Labour council leaderships campaigned against the cuts in local government finance, even though simultaneously they translated those financial cuts into cuts in services and jobs.

Gradually that faded to almost nothing. More recently Labour councils have been quiet. There wasn't even a loud demand from

councillors, in the run up to the 2015 general, for a future Labour government to restore the funding cut by the Tories.

By and large, the Tories have been able to get a large proportion of the cuts they wanted done for them by Labour in local government.

Some Labour councils have made positive changes around the edges of making cuts. Others have gone enthusiastically with the Tory flow. But all Labour councils have made big cuts.

There are no guarantees of victory. There never are in struggles. But both logic and historical examples show that struggle could win.

In fact, the risks are smaller than they once were, and while the Tories would have many advantages in such a battle, our side would have many advantages too.

BUDGET
Sometimes the alternative is described as setting a "deficit budget". That is a bit misleading.

Councils can borrow money, but unlike central government, they cannot operate in a sustained way on the basis of a deficit, borrowing more or less at will or printing money. There is no way to beat cuts just by financial juggling.

Still, councils are large organisations with complex finances which give them quite a bit of leeway. They can cut top management salaries and perks. They can scrap wasteful spending like using agency workers and consultants. They can sell non-service-providing commercial assets. They can juggle accounts to move spending items from one fi-

nancial year to the next, or draw on future revenues. They can run down reserves. They can set budgets which are "balanced" on paper but defiant in reality.

Such financial gambits are no long term strategy. But they can buy enough time for councillors to mobilise council and other workers, council tenants and the wider community in a campaign to demand funding is restored.

If any significant number of Labour councils defied the Tories in the way I have described, refused to make cuts, and mobilise a big campaign, the government would have to retreat quickly. If even one council took a stand, the Tories would have a serious fight on their hands.

Poplar in East London in the 1920s and Clay Cross in Derbyshire in the 1970s took a strong stand of defiance against a Tory government. And, although both were fairly small councils, the only ones which remained defiant when other Labour councils faded, both won. Both won changes in government policy.

The law has been changed, either because the Tories don't want to make martyrs, or because they think scarce any sanctions are needed to keep councillors in line. The legal powers to jail councillors, as during the Poplar struggle, or heavily fine and bankrupt them, as in Clay Cross, or surcharge them, as happened to Liverpool and Lambeth councillors in the 1980s (after they'd backed down), no longer exist.

The Secretary of State for Local Government does have wide powers to send in commissioners to run a

council, as has recently been done in Tower Hamlets.

But think about it. The Tories send in unelected commissioners to take over a local authority and impose cuts — and the elected councillors are on the streets, around the Town Hall, campaigning against those cuts. They are backed by council workers and a mobilised local community.

A victory against the cuts would be much more possible in this scenario. Certainly more possible than if it's ruled out in advance by the councillors meekly making the cuts.

VICTORY
Directly imposing cuts against the organised and mobilised will of the local community and its elected representatives is more difficult than having them done for you by elected councillors who tell the community that the cuts are unavoidable and as small and gentle as they could be.

My guess is that in fact the Tories would hesitate. They'd first hope that pressure and threats would make the councillors lose their nerve.

Demonstrations, strikes, rent strikes, residents withholding council tax, the council withholding PAYE or VAT money, would all be possible. The aim should be mounting pressure to force concessions from the Tories, push them to back down, and create the best possible conditions for their replacement by a Labour government which will restore funding.

Councillors should be pushed to integrate themselves as a part of a democratic anti-cuts movement



Clay Cross councillors and supporters in the 1970s

which discusses, debates and decides how to pursue and escalate the campaign against the government.

Councillors will have little credibility with workers, tenants and the community unless they themselves take a stand against the government by refusing to vote for cuts. Measures like cutting top management pay are important not because they can plug the funding gap, but because they demonstrate political will. They

mark a break from the model of Labour councils which continue to pay huge salaries at the top, use consultants, private services, academise schools, and make cuts without a murmur.

The first step must be a strong anti-cuts movement to fight the cuts regardless of what councillors do, building unity across the left and labour movement in that fight.

Stop the Labour Purge!

Since the last issue of *Solidarity*, there have been a number of successes for the campaign to stop the witch-hunt against the left in the Labour Party.

Andrew Fisher, Jeremy Corbyn's chief policy adviser, has been reinstated to membership after a month of suspension.

Two socialists expelled from the Labour Party, Liam Cooper in Lambeth and Gerry Downing in Brent, have been reinstated follow appeals and protests locally.

One of the six comrades expelled because of their association with Workers' Liberty has received confirmation that they will have an appeal hearing. The other comrades are also appealing.

On the other hand the Stop the Labour Purge campaign has received reports of other left-wingers expelled from the party in places around the country. In other words, the campaign to stop the purge is both highly necessary — and, if we step it up, can win.

What you can do:

- Pass a motion against the purge through your Labour Party ward, CLP, union or other organisation. See stopthelabourpurge.wordpress.com for a model motion.
- Add your or your organisation's name to the statement signed by hundreds of labour movement activists across the country — also on the blog.
- Invite a speaker from the campaign: stopthelabourpurge@gmail.com
- Get in touch to let us know if you have any information about expulsions, people being barred, etc, or want to help with the campaign.

Stop the Labour Purge organising meeting

6.30pm, Tuesday 15 December

London, venue tbc

Chair: Pete Firmin

More info: stopthelabourpurge@gmail.com

Facebook: Stop the Labour Purge

Labour must challenge nationalist ideas

By Sacha Ismail

The media, the political establishment and probably some in the Labour right want a UKIP victory in the Oldham West by-election on Thursday 3 December in order to destabilise Jeremy Corbyn's leadership and prove left-wing politics cannot be popular.

There is a big campaign to boost UKIP and thus boost the possibility of it

winning.

Obviously, this campaign is not built on nothing. Socialists canvassing in Oldham confirm that right-wing and nationalist attitudes are widespread among former and current Labour voters. UKIP already had 20 percent of the vote in May's election, coming second. Agitation over the Paris atrocities, Syria, etc, and attacks on Corbyn, have made things worse.

There is a big, and long-

term, job for socialists and labour movement militants to educate in basic class ideas and shift the political debate. After thirty years of labour movement decline and almost as long of virtually unchallenged right-wing dominance of politics, that is a daunting task — but not impossible.

More immediately, Corbyn supporters organised in Momentum groups need to consider why the new Labour leadership has been

so reactive, and campaigned relatively little on the streets even when obvious opportunities presented themselves (tax credits, the NHS).

We need to discuss and organise together beyond the local level to hammer out campaigning issues and objectives for the months ahead — including demands on the Corbyn leadership about them.

The mass psychology of Islamo-fascism

Eric Lee



There can be little doubt that the murderous ideology of Islamic State is a form of fascism. In discussing how the left should react to it, it is therefore necessary to return to our sources, to learn how earlier generations of socialists understood — and fought — fascism.

In that fight, Trotsky was of course an inspiring and authoritative figure. As opposed to the Stalinists, who saw no difference between the Nazis and the Social Democrats (and indeed sometimes preferred the Nazis), Trotsky understood fascism to be a mortal danger to the working class.

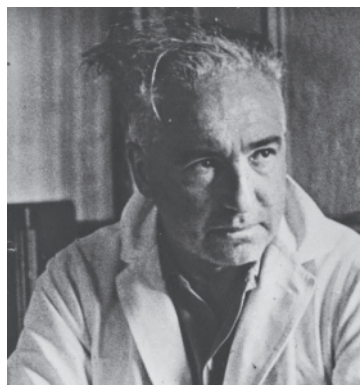
And while Trotsky's deconstruction of the Stalinist argument was brilliant, like most socialists of his time, he understood fascism as a form of bourgeois society, one in which one section of the ruling class crushed all others. The classical Marxist understanding of fascism, however, could not explain, and sometimes did not even try to explain, the tremendous appeal of fascism to the working class itself.

Which brings us to the brilliant Austrian Jewish psychologist Wilhelm Reich (1897-1957). Reich was one of Freud's outstanding disciples, but in the 1920s he moved increasingly to the left, eventually joining the Communist Party of Germany (KPD). There he engaged in theoretical work in an attempt to bridge the gap between Marxism and Freudianism. By 1929, he was able to get the official KPD journal *Under the Banner of Marxism* to publish his essay "Dialectical Materialism and Psychoanalysis."

Reich also moved beyond theory with field work in working-class communities, setting up clinics, carrying out sex education, and on, in the course of which he created a mass movement of young people engaged in a new politics of sexual liberation.

Reich grasped that fascism had its basis not only in the economic contradictions of a decaying, over-ripe capitalism, but also in the psychology of the masses.

His 1933 book, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, was an attempt to find out what made millions of workers who should have been a bulwark against fascism into its most fanatical supporters. Reich's book was so outrageously controversial that it led to his expulsion from the KPD. A year later, he was kicked out of the International Psychoanalytical Association



Wilhelm Reich

as well. It goes without saying that the Nazis too banned the book.

So what explained the appeal of fascism to people who would be its victims? Reich looked for what could make a child "apprehensive, shy, obedient, afraid of authority, good and adjusted in the authoritarian sense" and he found it in the family.

In particular, Reich linked the development of this kind of personality to the "suppression of the

natural sexuality in the child". He explained the lack of rebelliousness in such children — and later in adult life — by this. Sexual repression, he believed, "paralyses the rebellious forces because any rebellion is laden with anxiety; it produces, by inhibiting sexual curiosity and sexual thinking in the child, a general inhibition of thinking and of critical faculties."

"In brief," he wrote, "the goal of sexual suppression is that of producing an individual who is adjusted to the authoritarian order and who will submit to it in spite of all misery and degradation."

AUTHORITARIAN

This was the basis for authoritarian society. "At first the child has to submit to the structure of the authoritarian miniature state, the family," he wrote, and "this makes it capable of later subordination to the general authoritarian system. The formation of the authoritarian structure takes place through the anchoring of sexual inhibition and anxiety."

Reich's expulsion from both the Communist and Psychoanalytical movements left him isolated, and over the remaining two decades of his life he drifted far away from both the Marxism and Freudianism which he had worked so hard to bridge.

But his work over the course of a decade made a real and enduring contribution to a socialist understanding of fascism and how to fight it. That contribution can teach us much

about the sources of Islamo-fascism today and how to defeat it.

Vulgar Marxists (and Trotsky was not one of those) are quick to point to simplistic class analyses to explain the rise of groups like Islamic State. Imperialism and colonialism left a legacy of poverty and inequality, and it was from a sense of powerlessness and despair that Islamism arose.

This argument has been somewhat undermined by the fact that so many of the more prominent terrorists (such as the 9/11 murderers) were educated, middle-class Muslims who lived in the West. Even today, there is no evidence linking young Muslims who run off to Syria to join IS with a personal experience of poverty or even oppression.

Wilhelm Reich's description of the patriarchal, authoritarian family as the incubator of fascism was correct in Germany in 1933 and it is correct today. There can be little doubt that the suppression of "sexual curiosity and sexual thinking in the child" is part of the reactionary character of most Muslim societies.

Muslim societies are obviously not the only sexually repressive societies in the world, which is why fascism can find roots in other places as well. But Islamism is today a particularly aggressive and expansionist variant of fascism, one which threatens the entire world.

If Reich's analysis is correct, what can socialists do to defeat fascism? Obviously, it is not enough to simply propose "class against class" as the answer. This was the view of the German Communists and it failed miserably as millions of ordinary Germans either supported the Nazis or accepted their rule with barely a murmur of protest.

Instead, the left should directly confront the sexually repressive character of Islamo-fascism and prioritise the fight on that level. That means that it should no longer be possible to say that our first task is building support for, say, workers organisations in Iran and that support for gay rights in that country is secondary. Gay rights, women's liberation, and sexual freedom are not by-products of the revolution that is coming to that part of the world — they are the revolution.

Because of Reich's later decline, a result in part of his expulsion from the both the left and the psychoanalytical movement, his works have been largely forgotten and ignored, certainly by socialists. This is unfortunate, because a book like *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* can contribute so much to our understanding of Islamism and how it will be defeated in the end.

Time to discuss the R-word

Labour
By Dave Osland



For the past three months, the very word "reselection" has been unmentionable in Labour left circles, for fear that even talking about it would represent an unwarranted provocation of the Labour right. But as recent events clearly underline, it's time to break the taboo.

At the very least, Corbyn supporters now have to — how can I put this gently? — engage in measured debate on how we approach the next round of trigger ballots for sitting MPs.

Jeremy famously won't push the nuke button, but do we want to drop the D-bomb? And if we do, how should we best go about it?

I am, of course, going to be misrepresented on this, whatever I write. So let me stress from the get-go that this is not a call for comrades to "go out there and decapitate the bastards now".

I'm not speaking for Momentum, to which I have no connection beyond being on its mailing list. Nor am I speaking for the Labour Representation Committee, despite being on its national committee, nor for *Labour Briefing*, despite being on its editorial board. This is purely a personal opinion.

But as Dan Hodges put it in the *Telegraph* [recently], the Syria debate and the impending Oldham West by-election mean that, in his words, confrontation cannot now be avoided. Hey, let's not kid anybody. This is "Game On", right?

And let's be clear, moral responsibility for hostilities lies

with the provocateurs of the right, who have been looking for a scrap ever since 12 September. The irony is that since taking office, Corbyn has been Mr Nice Guy, persistently seeking to balance a new leader's natural desire to promote her or his own agenda with a determination to be as inclusive as possible.

Yes, he has insisted on key appointments such as McDonnell, Fisher and Milne. Yes, he has stuck with some of the policy positions that we all knew he had, but were the basis on which he was elected.

But hasn't acted against the expulsions of socialists. Apart from those, despite all the lurid talk of "purges", there simply haven't been any. Corbyn has even explicitly spoken out against mandatory reselection, a stance that many of us old Bennites regard as an article of the faith.

His reward has been an unrelenting and clearly co-ordinated barrage of hostility and attempts to undermine him.

[Until recently] I would have appealed to the Labour right's ostensible commitment to the best interests of the party to urge them "just don't go there", as the vernacular expression has it. Too late; they clearly want to go there.

As I know from various Labour left email discussion lists, committee meetings and private conversations, not all comrades are content to roll with the punches. While we have abided by the rules of omerta in public, there have obviously been strategic deliberations.

The Labour rulebook as it stands contains a mechanism — the so-called "trigger ballot" — that provides a means by which MPs who have lost the confidence of their constituency party can be given the boot. That process will unfold in two or three years. In addition, boundary changes will

mean that many sitting MPs will effectively be forced into a competitive selection anyway.

The underlying principle here is accountability, which comes from enabling party members to exercise the right to choose candidates, as they do for local councils and other offices before each election. That is hardly draconian or "Stalinist"; such provisions would be a prerequisite for a well-run stamp philately club.

Nor would reselection leave us the wrong side of public opinion. Many donkey-with-a-red-rosette voters would be happier if MPs who have perhaps not been entirely assiduous in their constituency work made way for those with a better community base.

Reselection isn't even intrinsically leftwing. Many countries have a right of recall for elected politicians, and all three main parties are theoretically committed to the idea. There are plenty politicians on the British right — not least Tory London mayor hopeful Zac Goldsmith — that argue persuasively for the proposition.

Ultimately, the decision will be one for local Labour Party activists, and affiliated union branches. Will they continue to have faith in MPs who have wickedly engaged in sabotage of a leader currently backed by two-thirds of the membership?

But that doesn't preclude the national organisations of the Labour left taking a position on the question of reselection in principle. And to my mind, you can never have too much democracy, can you?

• First published on Left Futures blog (www.leftfutures.org/) on 28 November 2015.



US-UK bombing won't stop Daesh!

On Wednesday 2 December (after we go to press) the House of Commons will vote on proposals to extend UK air strikes to Syria. As Jeremy Corbyn has given Labour MPs a free vote, Cameron is likely to have a majority for extending the bombing.

The government says the renewed military campaign, now including UK, US, France, Turkey and the Gulf States, will be aimed at pushing back Daesh (Islamic State). But it is unlikely to make a decisive impact on Daesh's position. It is more likely to perpetuate the current stalemate between all the military-political forces in Syria. That is, in fact, the preferred option of the military-political alliance the UK is joining. They want *containment* of the conflict until a deal on the future of Syria can be agreed.

At the very best the bombing may push back Daesh... in favour of some other Sunni-sectarian Islamist militia. 14 years of US bombing in Afghanistan have left the Taliban (and jihadi-terrorism more widely) stronger, not weaker, than at the end of 2001.

Cameron's stance is political, not humanitarian. This is not an attempt to secure security for the ordinary people affected by Daesh's recent atrocities in Paris or Beirut or over Sinai. It will not create peace in Syria or stem the flow of refugees flee-

ing that country. There is no plan to destroy Daesh or end the Syrian civil war.

Cameron wants to look like a statesman in the eyes of the UK's allies, and have a seat in US world-policy circles.

Meanwhile the Russian state continues to pursue its own political aims, bombing targets in Syria that are of most threat to the Assad regime. That regime has killed and displaced more people in Syria than any other single force fighting there. The primary target of Russian bombing is groups under the "Free Syrian Army", the same forces which the US, France et al now refer to.

David Cameron claims there are 70,000 FSA fighters in Syria ready to be mobilised in a fight against Daesh. In fact the FSA is only an umbrella term for various forms of political Islamist, from relatively moderate to more hard line. Their main concern is to fight Assad, not Daesh. They are often intensely Sunni-sectarian. They offer no hope of a progressive outcome. Socialists cannot support them and, in fact, the US and UK and France have no plans to endorse them either.

Corbyn's decision to allow Labour MPs to have a free vote is a big political mistake and will neither heal the deep divisions in the Parliamentary Labour Party nor close the gulf between Labour members, who are mostly against bombing in

Solidarity with the Kurds!

After the Gulf states, the US and UK's strongest ally in the region is Turkey.

Turkey has the deepest involvement with some of the anti-Assad forces, including the Al Qaeda affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra and Daesh itself. Much of Daesh's oil is transported out of Syria via Turkey.

Turkey is also engaged in fighting the force most able to push back Daesh and Assad in the Kurdish areas of northern Syria — the Kurdish Peoples' Protection Units (YPG). These Kurdish forces represent a predominantly secular and largely non-sectarian force in the bloodbath of Syria.

While the Kurds have come under sustained attack from Daesh, Turkey has intervened directly against the Kurds, including attacking YPG supporters and affiliates in Northern Iraq, closing the border to Kurds wishing to join the fighting, repressing Kurdish activists within Turkey.

The UK government's response to Turkey, its NATO ally, has been to tolerate repression.

The FSA has also taken an Arab chauvinist position against the Kurds, for example excluding them from negotiation.

While not endorsing the politics of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK, the group behind the YPG), we unequivocally back the right of the Kurds to military aid and assistance including their demand for arms.

- They should be able to accept military aid from wherever it can be obtained in order to secure their fight against Daesh, Assad and where necessary the Turkish state.

- The PKK should be removed from the EU and US lists of terrorist organisations.

- If the Kurds demand a "no-fly", or more accurately a "no-bombing" zone, in order to improve their military position — an option which is unlikely to be included in the current plans of major imperialist powers, as long as Turkey is hostile to the Kurds — we should not oppose this as we would big-power bombing.

Syria, and the PLP. In fact it will galvanise Corbyn's enemies.

We support Jeremy Corbyn and others in the Labour Party and labour movement in their opposition to the bombing and regret they haven't been strong enough to make the Labour MPs stick by the Labour conference decision against bombing.

In doing so we in no way follow the pro-Assad and phoney anti-imperialist line of the Stop the War Coalition, who have continually refused to condemn the murderous regime of Assad. That regime has killed and displaced millions of people within Syria and caused millions more to flee the country. Our opposition to Western bombing endorses neither Assad nor his allies in Lebanon, Russia and Iran.

The Syrian Solidarity Campaign has rightly criticised the Stop the War Coalition, saying: "If Stop the War's slogan 'Don't bomb Syria' is to have any meaning, let them demand the end of the regime whose bombs have killed so many.

"If Stop the War oppose imperialism let them demonstrate their sincerity outside the Russian Embassy. Let them demonstrate with placards calling for Russia to stop bombing Syrian hospitals."

Unfortunately the SSC downplay the number of people killed by Daesh and other Islamist forces. Mass graves have been found in the wake of Daesh. They may not have killed hundreds of thousands, as Assad has, but they have butchered many more than we yet know about.

We reject the notion that Islamist-inspired terrorist attacks in France or against Russia, are "blowback" against military action.

Daesh's actions are not rooted in a knee-jerk response to western imperialism. Daesh has its own interpretation of and programme for the world. It is a far right political-religious movement, and we are fundamentally opposed to it, just as we are to every other far right and fascist movement. It is in fact Eurocentric to characterise the actions of Daesh in Paris, Beirut and Sinai as just reactions to the foreign policy of the European powers or the USA.

We do not oppose the bombing of Syria because it will make people in "Britain less safe" (i.e. "provoke" Daesh into further atrocities, as many on the left argue), but because the bombing is fundamentally not aimed towards an end to the ongoing and vicious sectarian conflict, and will not bring that end closer. It will serve only to keep the UK, France, and the USA "in the game" — a bloody and reactionary game.



Don't mourn, organise

A Workers' Liberty meeting and Christmas social event celebrating the life and struggles of Joe Hill, who was murdered by the bosses a hundred years ago.

Saturday, 19 December

6:30pm — 12 midnight

The Union Tavern, 52 Lloyd Baker Street, London WC1 9AA

On 19 November 1915, the Swedish American labour movement activist and songwriter Joe Hill was executed in Utah, after being framed for murder. He was killed because he was a trouble maker.

As an organiser of the Industrial Workers of the World, Hill helped to embolden workers in their fights against repressive and violent bosses, writing songs to bolster morale and solidarity.

A commitment to socialism, women's rights and anti-racism was the meaning of Hill's life. That will continue to live on, as long as working-class people are forced to sell their labour power to capitalists to survive, and need to organise together to overthrow the system of wage slavery.

Hill never lost his faith in that fight:

"If the workers take a notion, they can stop all speeding trains;

Every ship upon the ocean they can tie with mighty chains.

Every wheel in the creation, every mine and every mill, Fleets and armies of the nation, will at their command stand still."

Our evening will start with documentary clips and readings about Joe Hill, the IWW and US labour struggle in the years leading up to the First World War. Then over drinks and food we will listen to his songs and discuss.

• www.workersliberty.org/story/2014/07/10/wobblies-joe-hill100.com/

• labornotes.org/blogs/2015/11/striking-job-joe-hills-living-message

• www.haymarketbooks.org/pb/Letters-of-Joe-Hill

The far left in North

Marc Mulholland is a historian working at Oxford University, and the author of books including "Northern Ireland: A Very Short Introduction". He spoke at the Workers' Liberty 2015 summer school, Ideas For Freedom, on the history of the far left in Northern Ireland.

Trotskyism in the early 1960s in Northern Ireland is interesting and unusual, in that it was most prominent amongst the Protestant working-class.

The Socialist Labour League, which became the WRP, got together a group of people around Jackie Vance, who came from working-class East Belfast. They had a group in the Draughtsman and Allied Technicians Association, a shipyard union. They had an influence in branches of that union in Protestant East Belfast, and an influence in the Northern Ireland Labour Party.

They were able to take over the Young Socialist organisation in the 1960s, at a time when the Northern Ireland Labour Party was growing quite considerably. It was picking up a decent amount of Protestant working-class votes, and a whole bunch of Catholic working-class votes. It didn't lead to a massive breakthrough in terms of seats, but in terms of votes they were beginning to make the ruling Unionist party very worried in Belfast.

The Socialist Labour League didn't talk about the national question or partition. It campaigned primarily on the issue of youth unemployment. They condemned the Northern Ireland Labour Party for its lack of militancy and its inability to enthuse young people. The Labour Party would sound quite socialist now, compared to social democracy in the 21st century, but nevertheless at the time it seemed pretty tepid.

From about 1964-65, the advance of the Northern Ireland Labour Party began to slow, partly because of the new technocratic, liberal Prime Minister Terence O'Neill, who stole some of the modernising clothes of the Labour Party. By 1965 the Socialist Labour League had left the Northern Ireland Labour Party, just as the Socialist Labour League in Britain was leaving the British Labour Party. So the SLL and this very



Prime Minister Terence O'Neill



Eamonn McCann at a protest in Derry in 1969

interesting group of working-class people around Jackie Vance didn't really have much influence in the Civil Rights movement.

More significant were the students. The big names were Michael Farrell and Eamonn McCann, who went to Queen's Belfast. Both were very talented people — Michael Farrell competed in an all-Ireland university debating competition, narrowly losing to Anthony Clare. Next year he was succeeded by Eamonn McCann. McCann was a notoriously fiery chap. He was expelled from Queen's after one night at the Literific Society when he got drunk, smashed the windows, and ran off with two bottles of champagne.

He was expelled from the university and went off to London, where he came across the Irish Workers' Group, an expatriate group of Trotskyist and Trotskyist-inclined people organising in London and trying to organise in Ireland too. They introduced McCann to Marxism.

MICHAEL FARRELL

If McCann was a live wire, Farrell was the organiser and strategist with ice water in his veins. People who knew him at the time said he was incredibly brave in any confrontation or run-in with the police.

Farrell was the intellectual leader of the far-left in Northern Ireland in the late 1960s. He was in the Northern Ireland Labour Party but interested in the idea of trying to expand to a wider constituency. He had concluded by the mid 60s that as many Protestant workers were voting for the Labour Party as were going to any time soon, and the NILP needed to do was to expand its appeal to the Catholic working-class. He argued for a broadening out of anti-Unionist opposition to include Republicans and primarily to the Nationalist party, often dismissed on the left as "Green Tories".

When McCann got back to Derry he spoke in similar terms. He said there were no enemies on the left, only debates. The idea was to build a broad, anti-Unionist alliance.

People were influenced by the mood of 1968. There was an anti-Vietnam-war movement in Northern Ireland. The press was increasingly talking about discrimination against Catholics. Parliamentary methods seemed to be getting people nowhere.

Austin Currie, a young representative of the Nationalist party at Stormont, had organised a sit-in at a house to protest against sectarian allocation of public housing. When he got to Stormont to talk about this, all the Unionist MPs laughed,

ern Ireland



People's Democracy member Bernadette Devlin was elected to Westminster as a "Unity" candidate in Mid-Ulster in 1969

talked amongst themselves and ignored him. Currie threw his papers at the front bench of the government, saying there was no point coming to Stormont, that nothing could get done there.

In 1968 the situation was ripe for politics to go on the streets. The first demonstration was organised by Eamonn McCann and his comrades in Derry. McCann wanted a demonstration to provoke the police into an overreaction, which would get on TV. This worked rather better than he had expected, and the police went nuts on 5 October, battering people off the street. That kicked off what the *Belfast Telegraph* called a "50 day revolution", with daily demonstrations protesting against discrimination across Northern Ireland.

Many demonstrators in Northern Ireland identified very strongly with Martin Luther King and the civil rights marches in the US. They adopted the American strategy — exposing the racist nature of the state by demonstrating until they hit you over the head with a baton. The Northern Irish police were very willing to do that.

With the civil rights movement, People's Democracy was set up. This was essentially Michael Farrell and his comrades bringing together a radical wing of the civil rights movement. One of the committee was Bernadette Devlin. When she was elected to Westminster in April 1969, she was the youngest woman ever to have been elected to Parliament. At the time of Bloody Sunday, she went across to the government bench and smacked Maudling (then the Tory Home Secretary) in the face. When challenged on her actions she said they rep-

resented the voice of the proletariat.

Some historians like Simon Prince say the Troubles were the fault of the far left, because they used the tactics of provocation. Instead of exposing the capitalist nature of the state and bringing workers together, they worked upon the inherent divisions of Catholic and Protestant and plunged Northern Ireland into the disaster of sectarian armed struggle. They detonated a situation they didn't properly understand.

I think there's a little bit of truth to that, but it's mostly wrong. It focuses a lot on the march from Belfast to Derry, which is ambushed by loyalists and off-duty policemen at Burntollet, a PD march which was organised to provoke and expose the nature of the state, and is often looked at as the point of no return. But there weren't really many more marches after that one. They effectively stopped.

What really drove Northern Ireland into crisis was a split within the ruling elite. The Unionist government called an election. Terence O'Neill [the Northern Ireland prime minister] was trying to stamp down the hardliners in his own party. What it actually did was give the hardliners an opportunity to show their true strength.

As Lenin put it, the governed didn't want to go on being governed in the old way, and those who governed couldn't go on governing in the old way. The far-left had a role in the politics of provocation, but more importantly there was a rotten state in Northern Ireland, and a split in the ruling elite.

By the early 1970s the far left increasingly became marginalised. Michael Farrell had more or less given up on the Protestant working-class. In 1972, in his now very shrunk People's Democracy organisation, he was saying that, this side of the unification of Ireland, the Protestant working-class was only really a resource for fascism. McCann didn't go as far, but he certainly had no optimism about workers' unity.

There were other groups on the far-left, like the Militant Tendency which prioritised working-class unity in a rather economic fashion.

IRA

We often think of the IRA as being apolitical and reactionary in the early 1970s. It's not quite right. We tend to think that because the history of the early Provos was written by Official IRA people who wanted to condemn them as right-wing. It's also been written by people like Gerry Adams who want to claim they invented the notion of politics.

But if you look at *Republican News* or *An Phoblacht* in the early 70s, there's plenty of politics there. Bob Purdie, a Scottish guy who was the Irish expert for the International Marxist Group, was an intellectual defender of the Provisional IRA in the 1970s. There were more than a few articles by him in *Republican News* ruling out any argument that you can expect anything of the Protestant working-class.

Michael Farrell and his group got a lot of respect from Provisional Republicans. PD, though quite small, acted as a kind of intellectual ginger group for the Republicans.

But it wasn't the only intellectual ginger group. There was also Desmond Fennell, who's an odd intellectual. Parts of his thought are fascistic, parts are Catholic social, parts are socialist, he was all over the shop. But he was also a fellow-traveller of the Republican movement.

If PD influenced them in the North, Fennell influenced them in the South. He thought that there might be two nations in Ireland, of which the Protestants in the North might be one. So it might be a good idea to think of a federal Ireland which allowed for self-determination for the Ulster Protestants. That idea had influence on the Provo leadership, particularly in Dublin, where they had been arguing for a federal Ireland based on the four historic provinces.

In the North, people like Farrell were arguing that the Protestant working-class could only be a resource for fascism, and that any idea of Protestant self-determination opened the road to fascism. There was a debate around this, and a debate



Belfast 1968, students demonstrate against police brutality on civil rights protests

which is won by the Farrell side. *Republican News* openly attacked Desmond Fennell and called him a traitor and a bastard who should be thrown out (a very bitter thing to do, at a time when "traitors" got shot).

People's Democracy played a very significant role in Republican thinking in the 1970s, not necessarily in a very optimistic way.

By 1975-76, Michael Farrell had moved away from the catastrophist position that Northern Ireland was on the brink of fascism and that you could expect nothing of the Protestant working-class. He started arguing instead for a mass movement that brought politics in and around the armed struggle.

That opened the door for a strategy adopted by the Provisional leadership of hunger strikes and the rise of a mass Sinn Féin. If you look at Sinn Féin now, it's a party that has obvious echoes of 1968 and the New Left. I think that is down to the influence of people Michael Farrell and the New Left, despite them never actually being members of Sinn Féin.



Michael Farrell

Equality makes us live longer

Les Hearn reviews *The Health Gap: The Challenge of an Unequal World* (Bloomsbury, 2015).

Someone (possibly Stalin) once said “When one man dies, it’s a tragedy. When a million die, it’s a statistic.” But, to Professor Sir Michael Marmot, a million deaths is not just a statistic.

A million people have died prematurely in just the last five years in Britain, according to the renowned epidemiologist Michael Marmot, author of *The Health Gap*, who has spent a lifetime trying to counteract such cynicism. For him, the deaths of millions worldwide from same cause, inequality, are millions of tragedies which could and should be prevented.

Marmot was a medical student in the 60s when he realised that illnesses were not just isolated problems for the doctor to solve but symptoms of something bigger. Sitting in with a psychiatrist in a Sydney hospital, he recounts seeing a woman enter, a “picture of misery”. She said “Oh doctor, my husband is drinking again and beating me, my son is back in prison, my teenage daughter is pregnant, and I cry most days, have no energy, difficulty sleeping. I feel life is not worth living.” It seems that she was depressed. (Marmot describes his mood dipping also). The psychiatrist told her to stop taking the blue pills and try some red ones, telling her to come back in a month’s time. Marmot felt that this seemed somewhat inadequate, but the psychiatrist explained that there was very little else he could do.

But it wasn’t just mental illness that resulted from people’s living conditions: immigrant workers would come into his Sydney hospital with “a pain in the belly,” be prescribed antacids and sent home. What seemed obvious to Marmot, that conditions of life contributed to both mental and physical illness, was then not generally accepted and he lacked the evidence to prove it. He has devoted the rest of his career to gathering that evidence.

PREVENTION

The young doctor Marmot felt that his profession were treating illnesses as fires that needed putting out, but the fires kept recurring.

What about some fire prevention? The doctors didn’t seem to have the time or tools for that. When he expressed these views, his consultant suggested that Marmot go into epidemiology, the study of the connections between illness and the conditions of people’s lives.

Learning his trade as an epidemiologist in California, he looked at how the health of Japanese immigrants changed. He found that their rate of heart attacks went up but their rate of strokes went down, in both cases approaching that of the host American community. This was probably linked to their diet becoming more “American,” but they still maintained some health advantage from their previous lives in Japan, probably linked to their more supportive family and social networks.

Later, Marmot worked on two large studies of the British civil service, the Whitehall studies, following the health of some 27,000 government employees from the most senior down to unskilled manual workers. Contrary to received wisdom, it was not the top civil servants who had the highest rate of heart attacks but the lowest status ones. The lowest level workers had higher rates of nearly all diseases. In case you thought this was because they tended to drink and smoke more and have unhealthy diets, Marmot’s team corrected the data for this and found that two thirds of the health difference was due to the position or status of the workers in the hierarchy. Furthermore, the risk of ill health rose as you went down the levels — there was a social gradient to mortality for many diseases and everyone was somewhere on the gradient¹.

Briefly, it seemed that it was not poverty as such that disadvantaged people but low social status, and somehow this was making them ill. This brings us back to the million premature deaths every five years in Britain. The calculation comes from applying the death rate of university-educated people to the whole population. Once again, there is a gradient relating the amount of education to greater life expectancy. Marmot sees this as an aspect of the gradient of social status and refers to studies showing that stress hor-



Junior doctors protest: fighting our exploitation as workers is struggling for equality in all regards, including health equality.

mones are generally higher in those with less control over their lives: “Inequalities in health arise from inequalities in society.”

These social gradients exist in all countries, superimposed on a gradient between countries. Thus, infant mortality in Mozambique is 12% compared with 0.2% in Colombia. But even in Mozambique there is a gradient, with the most educated mothers experiencing an infant mortality rate of less than half that of the least educated.

On the basis of average income (GDP per capita), Mozambique is one of the poorest countries while Colombia is in the middle. In general, average income is related to life expectancy, but some countries buck the trend. The USA is the richest large country and yet average life expectancy is the same as for Cuba, with about a fifth of the income. The difference is in the extent of inequality in these countries. We also find that within Europe, the Scandinavian countries have the least inequality and the greatest life expectancy.¹

The gradients within countries can be staggering. In the UK, life expectancies can vary by nearly thirty years between neighbourhoods in the same city. In run-down Calton, Glasgow, male life expectancy, at 54, is less than the average for India (62) while in more affluent, higher status Lenzie, it is 82. It seems paradoxical that the income of a low status Glaswegian is much higher than that of the average Indian but Marmot quotes economist Amartya Sen saying it’s “not only how much money you have that matters for your health, but what you can do with what you have.”

Of course, you can find causes for ill health among the poor, smoking, poor nutrition, alcohol and drug abuse, respiratory disease from air pollution and so on, but Marmot is more interested in the “causes of the causes.” These lie in lack of control over one’s life, high demand, isolated, low status work, lack of correspondence between effort and reward, as Marmot exemplifies with the case of a warehouse “picker” who works long shifts fulfilling orders for online shopping. The picker walks over 10 km per shift, lifting hundreds of heavy objects, not seeing a fellow worker, subject to discipline for trivial faults, and paid a pittance.

Communities, in Glasgow, Cuba, USA, are an important part of inequality — or equality. Marmot gives the example of Mary, a First Nations (native American) Canadian teenager, who killed herself. This individual tragedy had several contributory factors, home circumstances, community, welfare services, but it was not isolated. Many young First Nations Canadians also commit suicide, the rate being five times that for all young Canadians. But this is not just a sad statistic.

First Nations people are organised into about 200 “bands” of which half had hardly ever had a suicide while 90% of the suicides occurred in 12% of the bands. Poverty, low education, unemployment, poor health and low life expectancy are common in all bands — the difference was in the degree that bands were able to hold on to their cultural history and promote their collective future. Officials blamed the child welfare services, but Marmot quotes a Canadian psychologist saying that, rather than target suicide, the aim should be to make communities healthier places for youth to live.

Marmot’s message is that to reduce health inequity we need fairer societies. This message comes from WHO’s Commission on Social Determinants of Health,² chaired by Marmot, and from his review in England, *Fair Society, Healthy Lives*.³ The determinants of health are not so much the medical treatments people receive as they are the characteristics of their societies. Improving living conditions and working conditions, building supportive communities, reducing income inequality, reducing air pollution...are some of the factors that will help.

This sounds like it would require a socialist society but a lot can be done right now. Many councils in Britain are trying to implement Marmot’s proposals (Coventry calls itself a “Marmot city,”⁴ while Lancashire, Chichester, Durham, Worcestershire, Barnsley and Walsall are introducing aspects of Marmot).

BETTER

Crucially, working conditions, as well as wages, are better where trades unions are active. Not only that but workers themselves can have creative ideas to make their work more effective and fulfilling.

Marmot gives the example of the Merseyside fire-fighters who started visiting people’s homes to encourage use of smoke detectors and found themselves sorting out housing problems, counselling people on how to give up smoking, inviting pensioners to use their gym and helping children take part in sport. There is also the West Midlands fire service, who have explicitly responded to the Marmot review by trying to help the poor and needy in their community.

One example was an octogenarian contacted about fire safety when he was found to be burning rubbish in his living room for warmth as his gas had been cut off. It took the fire officer three weeks to be allowed in: she asked the man what he did all day — nothing, apart from trips to local shops for food, since his electricity had been cut off 26 years earlier. He saw no one. “The fire officer brought him clothes, Christmas dinner, located his sister, and finally got him on needed medication and into sheltered accommodation.”

Marmot’s lesson is that the health of all of us is affected by inequality and we need to work together to reduce inequality and improve our health. Marmot doesn’t say it, but this is best done through collective action of the sort discouraged by our present capitalist system.

References

- 1 A wealth of animated graphs and other information about health, life expectancy, income etc. is available on this website: <http://www.gapminder.org>
- 2 WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health report (2008): http://www.who.int/social_determinants/thecommission/finalreport/en/
- 3 Fair Society, Healthy Lives (UCL Institute of Health Equity, 2010): <http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/projects/fair-society-healthy-lives-the-marmot-review>
- 4 Coventry: a Marmot City http://www.coventry.gov.uk/info/176/policy/2457/coventry_a_marmot_city

Our weapon? Human connection

Daisy Thomas reviews *Mockingjay*, Part Two.

In the age old tale of good versus evil, the final instalment of *The Hunger Games* trilogy (*Mockingjay*, part two) doesn't disappoint.

This story is rife with revolution and revolt, power returning to the previously powerless, the oppressed rising up against their cruel oppressors, and the uniting and restorative power of hope. These are familiar tales and themes from our history books, our fairy tales, from our current events. What distinguishes this film and makes it so damn compelling is the representation of the uprising.

What some may call a "slow burn" actually makes for a plausible uniting of different peoples (from the various districts of Panem). The start of the uprising and the call to action begins in the first part of *Mockingjay*, but by the time that we catch up with Katniss Everdeen (played superbly by Jennifer Lawrence), she's struggling with the man and weapon that Peeta Mellark (Josh Hutcherson) has become at the deadly hands of President Snow himself.

Even though the Capitol hides many sins in its entitlement, gluttony, lack of consideration for the less fortunate, and exceedingly materialistic attitudes, the real villains of this whole enterprise are President Snow (Donald Sutherland) and his vile Gamemakers. Snow uses murder and mayhem as his own sick sport, and there seems to be no stopping him until Katniss becomes our unlikely and reluctant heroine.

Over and over in this film, and indeed in this series, do we see the enduring nature of the human spirit and the capacity for connection, even amongst dreadful trauma and horror. During one particularly tense scene when Katniss is at gunpoint, we see the power of a common enemy to unite even



those who were fighting each other to death only moments ago. In Katniss' rousing and uniting words, we hear her call to action: "We all have one enemy! He corrupts everyone, and everything! He turns the best of us against each other. Tonight, turn your weapons, to the Capitol! Turn your weapons, to Snow!"

The story of the cruel and unjust dictator who controls people through fear and their own weaknesses is not an unfamiliar one. And President Snow is certainly no exception. He exploited Katniss' care and love for Peeta while he kept him hostage and brutally tortured and brainwashed him until there was almost none of the original kind, gentle, and caring Peeta left.

Power itself may not be inherently good or bad, but power, in the wrong hands, can most certainly be used for malicious and nefarious purposes. It may only start with one voice, but after a civilisation has faced so much fear, control, exploitation, oppression, and cruelty, it doesn't take much to turn the tide of revolution and take back the power for the purposes of good.

So, how does a young adult book and film franchise translate to our world at large? It's every individual's interpretation, of course, but I found it to be a quite an interesting look at the trajectory of corruption, revolution, and hope. As long as one person is willing to stand for what is right and just in this world, more are likely to follow. And with that push for justice, comes the shining example of human connection and the enduring nature of the human spirit to rise up again and again against adversity and view each day with renewed resilience and hope.

If nothing else is taken from this film, this book, or even this review, it should be this: we could all use a little more heroism in our day-to-day. It doesn't have to be saving the world from an evil dictator or saving New York City from an alien spaceship, but remembering that genuine human connection is the biggest and best weapon we have against those who would seek to break it and ill-use it.

Feminism is for sex workers too!

Kelly Rogers



London's annual radical feminist-led demonstration against sexual and domestic violence, Reclaim the Night, took place in London on 28 November, under fire for its sex worker-exclusive approach to feminism.

Reclaim the Night have a long history of making sex workers who continue to work in the industry and sex worker blocs very unwelcome. This year, the coalition which organised London RTN publicly condemned Amnesty International's decision to support the full decriminalisation of all aspects of prostitution.

They argue that prostitution is a form of violence against women and call for the implementation of the "Nordic Model" in the UK, referring to legislation first adopted in Sweden in 1999 (sexköpslagen) which criminalises the purchase of sex and, on paper, decriminalises the selling of sex.

In practice, however, the activity of sex workers remains criminalised under the Nordic model, and their working conditions become considerably more dangerous. Under sexköpslagen sex workers have noted increasingly hurried negotiations with clients, especially among those who work on the street, as clients are unwilling to negotiate for long periods when they are at risk of arrest.

The sex purchase law and drop in clients willing to buy sex publicly (not overall) has meant that competition has increased, prices have gone down and sex workers are often pressured to offer less safe sex and services.

It remains illegal to provide premises for prostitution in Sweden meaning that landlords are obliged to evict sex workers or face prosecution themselves. Police are known to inform landlords that their tenants work in the industry, forcing evictions.

Sex workers working in groups or cohabiting for safety face penalties under anti-pimping laws, laws prohibiting brothel-keeping, and laws against sharing the income of prostitution. Sex workers have also reported losing custody over their children; harassment and abuse by the police; and migrant sex workers are detained and deported under the auspices of the prevention of trafficking.

Sex workers need to reclaim the night and the streets for themselves more than most. As Feminist Fightback writes, "Feminism needs sex workers and sex workers need feminism. There is an important role for sex workers organising within the feminist movement, and a particularly strong argument for their presence on the Reclaim the Night march as a group of women who face routine violence from the state and the police, as well as from other sources." It is tragic then, to say the least, that Reclaim the Night doesn't welcome sex workers onto their demonstrations.

Reclaim the Night's anti-sex work approach is very much anti-feminist in its approach to consent and agency. It follows the perspective of radical feminism where sex workers are stripped of their agency, and painted as disempowered, always-vulnerable, passive victims of violence and histories of abuse. Their ability to consent to sex for money is rejected. All transactions in the sex industry are considered violence against women.

YES

A cornerstone of feminism is that people have the absolute right to say "no" to sex. But, importantly, this is a right that comes hand-in-hand with that to say "yes".

If we're telling sex workers that they cannot say yes, then what are the implications when they tell their friends, family, health care professionals or the police that they said no and that they were raped? A woman's right to choose. A woman's right to have control over her own body. These are principles at the heart of feminism.

Rather than calling for the implementation of the Swedish model here in the UK then, as socialists and feminists we must argue for the self-organisation of workers against their exploitation. Sex workers, just like the rest of the working class, are exploited by their bosses under capitalism for profit.

Unlike most workers, however, sex workers very often don't have the protection of trade unions, health and safety law, employment law. When state authorities, like police and immigration authorities, penalise, imprison and deport sex workers, they are bolstering, rather than challenging their exploitation. They are dividing workers, both within the sex industry and between workers in different industries, and making it harder for us to organise in solidarity with one another.

We must understand that poverty is for considerable numbers of people (not all), the reason they enter the industry. As austerity hits, more and more mothers are resorting to sex work to feed their children. As tuition fees have gone up, students are in increasing numbers becoming sex workers. Migrant women who often have very little opportunity for other work and are faced with precarity, engage in sex work.

We must support sex workers by arguing for the decriminalisation of all aspects of sex work; a re-thinking of borders so that migrants have all of the rights that native citizens have; a dramatic increase in the powers of trade unions and the enshrinement of the rights of sex workers to organise. Also, policies aimed at promoting economic equality between classes and genders: a decent, guaranteed minimum income; an end to the part-time gender pay gap; free 24-hour child care; secure and affordable housing for all.

We must also recognise that consent is complicated, and there is no "normal" sexual relationship. Someone might have regular casual sex with strangers. A long-term couple might particularly enjoy having threesomes, and mutually negotiate who they might approach. People might have long-term polyamorous relationships with multiple people, who they might love or might not. A woman who calls themselves feminist may still like to be submissive in the bedroom because they're assertive and politically "right on" every other moment of their lives.

A sex worker might choose to be paid to have sex because, for them, sex isn't a precious, fragile thing that needs to be guarded jealously, but an act which they are willing to do in return for money, for the opportunity to manage one's own working life, or because they find the act of providing intimacy and pleasure rewarding. Sex is one of the ways that we operate within a complicated world, where people embody manifold gender and sexual identities, and have volatile, complex relationships with the people around them.

It is not our job to police people's sexual lives, and we must oppose attempts by radical feminists, such as those organising Reclaim the Night, to do so.

Rather, we must be struggling against capitalism, against our bosses, against political perspectives that divide us, and for the empowerment of all so that we can organise collectively against our exploitation.

• www.feministfightback.co.uk

Vote “in” EU to take the struggle forward!

If the Tory right wins its push to withdraw Britain from the EU, it will be to put up more barriers to people moving across borders and to social regulations spilling across Europe (redundancy regulations, working time regulations, agency worker regulations, TUPE...)

British capitalism outside the EU will immediately, practically, tangibly, be a greater evil for workers than British capitalism inside the EU.

Even that would not mandate a “in” vote in the coming EU in/out referendum, if that “in” vote were endorsement, approval, or positive support for the capitalist EU as it is.

Our “in” vote will, on the contrary, will be a declaration of intent to struggle in solidarity with workers and socialists continent-wide to transform Europe. We vote “in” because we want to start that struggle from the most advanced point that capitalist development has reached, and with the broadest arena possible — not to imagine that we can go forward by first backtracking through superseded, more limited, narrower forms of capitalism.

The basic argument here was sketched by Karl Marx in the one of those very few of his early writings that he and Engels took care to get reprinted repeatedly: “On the Question of Free Trade” (1848).

Marx flayed the bourgeois free traders and the whole economic system based on free trade. But “in the revolutionary sense”, in the interests of clearing the decks for the widest struggle to change that system, he “voted for” free trade against the more conservative bourgeois system of protectionism.

The whole line of argument [of the bourgeois free-traders] amounts to this: Free trade increases productive forces. If industry keeps growing, if wealth, if the productive power, if, in a word, productive capital increases, the demand for labour, the price of labour, and consequently the rate of wages, rise also.

The most favourable condition for the worker is the growth of capital. This must be admitted. If capital remains stationary, industry will not merely remain stationary but will decline, and in this case the worker will be the first victim. He goes to the wall before the capitalist.

And in the case where capital keeps growing, in the circumstance which we have said are the best for the worker, what will be his lot? He will go to the wall just the same. The growth of productive capital implies the accumulation and the concentration of capital. The centralisation of capital involves a greater division of labour and a greater use of machinery. The greater division of labour destroys the especial skill of the labourer; and by putting in the place of this skilled work labour which anybody can perform, it increase competition among the workers.

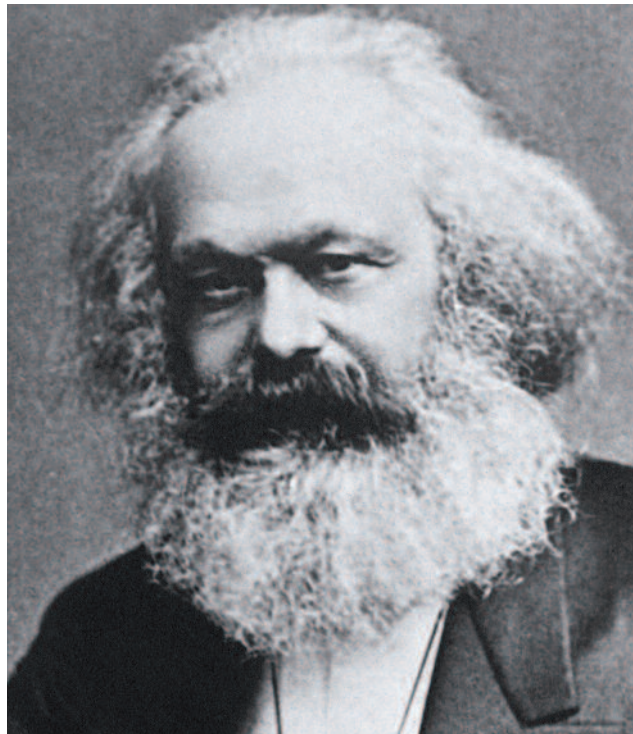
This competition becomes fiercer as the division of labour enables a single worker to do the work of three. Machinery accomplishes the same result on a much larger scale. The growth of productive capital, which forces the industrial capitalists to work with constantly increasing means, ruins the small industrialist and throws them into the proletariat.

Finally, the more productive capital increases, the more it is compelled to produce for a market whose requirements it does not know, the more production precedes consumption, the more supply tries to force demand, and consumption crises increase in frequency and in intensity. But every crisis in turn hastens the centralisation of capital and adds to the proletariat.

Thus, as productive capital grows, competition among the workers grows in a far greater proportion. The reward of labour diminishes for all, and the burden of labour increases for some...

Thus, of two things one: either we must reject all political economy based on the assumption of free trade, or we must admit that under this free trade the whole severity of the economic laws will fall upon the workers.

What is free trade under the present condition of society? It is freedom of capital. When you have overthrown the few national barriers which still restrict the progress of capital, you will merely have given it complete freedom of action. So long as you let the relation of wage labour to capital exist, it does not matter how favourable the conditions under which the exchange of commodities takes place, there will always



be a class which will exploit and a class which will be exploited. It is really difficult to understand the claim of the free-traders who imagine that the more advantageous application of capital will abolish the antagonism between industrial capitalists and wage workers. On the contrary, the only result will be that the antagonism of these two classes will stand out still more clearly.

Let us assume for a moment that there are no more national or local custom duties; in fact that all the accidental circumstances which today the worker may take to be the cause of his miserable condition have entirely vanished, and you will have removed so many curtains that hide from his eyes his true enemy. He will see that capital become free will make him no less a slave than capital trammelled by customs duties.

Gentlemen! Do not allow yourselves to be deluded by the abstract word “freedom”. Whose freedom? It is not the freedom of one individual in relation to another, but the freedom of capital to crush the worker.

Why should you desire to go on sanctioning free competition with this idea of freedom, when this freedom is only the product of a state of things based upon free competition?

MARKET

We have shown what sort of brotherhood free trade begets between the different classes of one and the same nation. The brotherhood which free trade would establish between the nations of the Earth would hardly be more fraternal.

To call cosmopolitan exploitation universal brotherhood is an idea that could only be engendered in the brain of the bourgeoisie. All the destructive phenomena which unlimited competition gives rise to within one country are reproduced in more gigantic proportions on the world market. We need not dwell any longer upon free trade sophisms on this subject.

For instance, we are told that free trade would create an international division of labour, and thereby give to each country the production which is most in harmony with its natural advantage.

You believe, perhaps, gentlemen, that the production of coffee and sugar is the natural destiny of the West Indies.

Two centuries ago, nature, which does not trouble herself about commerce, had planted neither sugar-cane nor coffee trees there.

And it may be that in less than half a century you will find there neither coffee nor sugar, for the East Indies, by means of cheaper production, have already successfully combatted his alleged natural destiny of the West Indies. And the West Indies, with their natural wealth, are already as heavy a burden for England as the weavers of Dacca, who also were destined from the beginning of time to weave by hand.

If the free-traders cannot understand how one nation can grow rich at the expense of another, we need not wonder,

since these same gentlemen also refuse to understand how within one country one class can enrich itself at the expense of another.

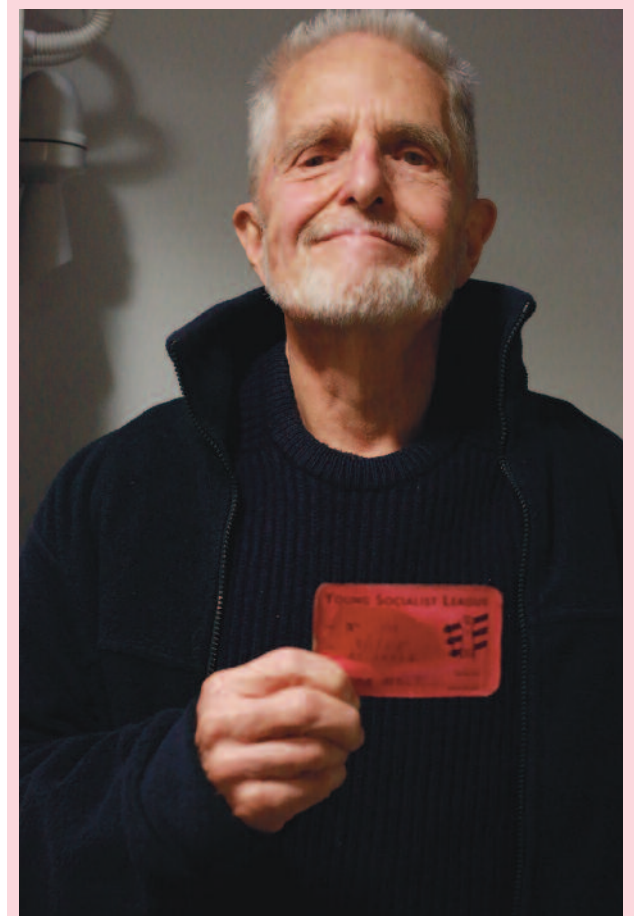
Do not imagine, gentlemen, that in criticising freedom of trade we have the least intention of defending the system of protection.

One may declare oneself an enemy of the constitutional regime without declaring oneself a friend of the ancient regime.

Moreover, the protectionist system is nothing but a means of establishing large-scale industry in any given country, that is to say, of making it dependent upon the world market, and from the moment that dependence upon the world market is established, there is already more or less dependence upon free trade. Besides this, the protective system helps to develop free trade competition within a country.

Hence we see that in countries where the bourgeoisie is beginning to make itself felt as a class, in Germany for example, it makes great efforts to obtain protective duties. They serve the bourgeoisie as weapons against feudalism and absolute government, as a means for the concentration of its own powers and for the realisation of free trade within the same country.

But, in general, the protective system of our day is conservative, while the free trade system is destructive. It breaks up old nationalities and pushes the antagonism of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie to the extreme point. In a word, the free trade system hastens the social revolution. It is in this revolutionary sense alone, gentlemen, that I vote in favour of free trade.



Workers' Liberty conference

Workers' Liberty members congregated in London for their annual conference on 21-22 November, to discuss motions on the Labour Party, socialist feminism, the student movement, the Middle East, among others, as well as to elect the National Committee for the next year.

Above is Workers' Liberty member Ed Strauss at the conference holding up his 1954 membership card from the Young Socialist League (YSL) in the US. The YSL was the youth wing of the Third Camp Trotskyist organisation, the Independent Socialist League.

Fight council cuts!

By a Lancashire council worker

Lancashire County Council is on the verge of making sweeping cuts.

The cuts include over 2,500 job losses (compulsory and voluntary). Around 40 of the 75 libraries in Lancashire will close, as will 5 out of the 10 council run museums, all subsidised bus routes, and numerous other front line services will be cut.

Since 2008 local Lancashire services have been repeatedly cut. Between January 2014 and October 2015 1,100 jobs have gone.

In February cuts of £152 million over three years were announced. In November the council revised up the level of cuts as the Tory government announced the dismantling of local services. The council are now being forced to make cuts of £685 million by 2020.

In response to the

planned cuts, many local people have started petitions and have launched "Save Our..." campaigns.

The Labour County council has done little to fight the cuts in the last five years. The councillors seem to think shrugging their shoulders and saying "it's not our fault" is enough! With the level of cuts announced the council will have great difficulty in meeting its statutory duties.

Unison, who represent 10,000 workers in the council, have launched, albeit rather late in the day, a campaign against the cuts, calling consultation meetings of staff across the county. Unfortunately, many members of Unison have been disheartened by the repeated failure to fight back against the pay freezes and service cuts.

Mobilising against these terrible cuts will also involve arguing with the currently ineffective union leadership.

Libraries fight continues

By a Lambeth library worker

Lambeth Council's cabinet will meet to again discuss the plan to close half of Lambeth's libraries on 7 December.

A lively local campaign, including a march and several demonstrations of hundreds of people, alongside a militant industrial strategy from library workers, who have staged wild-cat action as well as requesting an official ballot from Unison, has put a great deal of pressure on Lambeth to back down. Despite this the Scrutiny Committee narrowly decided (5-4) against sending the unpopular proposals back to Cabinet for full reconsideration. However it did make recommendations that Cabinet must now consider.

Popular local blog Brixton Buzz described the decision as a blow for the Cabinet Member responsible; "It's more or less a case of Cllr Edbrooke having her homework marked by Scrutiny, and then be handed back with a red biro comment saying: Could do better Jane. Much, much better."

The Scrutiny Committee recommendations include

- Urgent work to explore viable alternatives
- Consideration of early break clauses with private firms who take over libraries
- Further examination of the impact of the proposals on, and mitigations for, people with protected characteristics. The committee noted that children, younger, older, disabled and Black and Ethnic Minority people use libraries to a greater extent than the rest of the population.
- Internet access points for residents should be at least at the same level as the current provision."

In addition the council has been contacted by public interest lawyers pending a judicial review into the proposals.

We know that neither courts nor scrutiny committee will save our libraries, unless they are in a context of a real struggle by workers and library users. We are committed to demonstrate, strike and occupy.

We will take our fight into the Labour Party to call on local party members to hold their leadership to account.

Teachers fighting for respect

By Gemma Short

Teachers at Tech City, a 16-19 free school formerly known as STEM6 in Islington, London, have voted unanimously to strike for five days to fight for humane performance management and pay policies.

The strike vote comes after a teacher fainted and collapsed in front of a class she was teaching, resulting in an ambulance being called, due to the stress of management pressure. Another teacher was phoned late on a Sunday evening with instructions on what to do in her lesson observation the following day.

In November more than a third of staff were informed they would not be given their pay progression, with management citing poor exam results from the previous year, yet no teachers were given warning that this may happen, and none were given any support to improve their practice.

Students at the school

were also told in an assembly that teaching in the school was not up to standard and that it would be improved from January with "better teachers"!

Last year teachers at the school won union recognition by striking, becoming the first free school to officially recognise the NUT.

Teachers will strike on Tuesday 8, Wednesday 9, Tuesday 15, Wednesday 16 and Thursday 17 December.



Teachers on strike at STEM6 last year

• Send messages of support to:

nut@islington.org.uk

Victory at The John Roan school

After a number of strikes at The John Roan school in Greenwich teachers have won a significant victory which sets huge precedents on teacher workload and scrutiny.

The agreement stops weekly learning visits to scrutinise lessons, removes the expectation of students making 4 or 5 "levels of progress" for teachers not to fail, stops management using Ofsted grades for les-

sons observations, stops "drop-ins", gives teachers more manageable marking requirements and commits the school to a clear NUT agreed protocol for lesson observations.

Teachers had struck for two days in November to achieve this, as well as organising large picket lines at the school and a public meeting for parents which resulted in a parent support group being set up.

In a statement on their website the school NUT group said "we would like to thank everyone who has supported our struggle ... which we took in the best interests of education. Too many schools are being blighted by low morale and high teacher turnover.

"We hope others feel encouraged that we can take a stand and win."

Tube offer falls short

By Ollie Moore

London Underground's "closing offer" in ongoing disputes with unions over pay, 24-hour running ("Night Tube"), job losses, and other issues has been attacked as "totally unacceptable" by Tube union activists.

A supporter of the rank-and-file bulletin *Tubeworker* told *Solidarity*: "LU's offer is for a four-year pay deal, at levels that barely keep pace with inflation and would be almost completely negated by imminent increases to employees' National Insurance contributions. We have no desire to give the company four years of indus-

trial peace on this issue in return for crumbs from their table, especially when they've given senior managers big pay rises.

"We've made some progress on a few issues during the course of our disputes; what we've won we won by striking. To win more we need to assert ourselves industrially and politically, not just through negotiations."

A mass meeting of RMT reps on Tuesday 1 December returned a strong consensus against the deal. Other Tube unions are due to discuss it.

Defend Glen Hart:
bit.ly/DefendGlen

Fighting casualisation

By Ben Tausz

The grassroots network of casualised academic workers, Fighting Against Casualisation in Education, held its second national conference on 21 November.

Workplace activists from around the UK heard about university anti-outsourcing campaigns from Warwick to South Africa, and discussed issues from how to build

local campaigns to the impact of the government's proposed Teaching Excellence Framework.

A set of demands aiming to give the new network strategic direction was developed and voted on, including against unpaid hours of work and against the particular insecurity facing migrant workers.

Find out more about the network and how to get involved at fightingcasualisation.org.

Open university strike

By Peggy Carter

UCU members working at the Open University struck on 25 November after the university pushed ahead with plans to close seven regional centres, putting 502 jobs at risk.

Further rolling one-day strikes at the different sites under threat between 30 November and 11 December.

Staff at the regional centres evaluate and support students with disabilities,

provide course materials, assign tutorial groups, run examinations and run graduation ceremonies. UCU claims the closure of the regional centres will result in job losses and a loss of support for students.

A petition against the closures has over 6,400 signatures and an Early Day Motion opposing the closures has been tabled in Parliament.

• Sign the petition:
bit.ly/1N1agxU

Parking strike

By Charlotte Zalens

Parking wardens employed by contractor NSL in Enfield become the latest in London to strike to win a living wage.

NSL workers in Camden and in Kensington and Chelsea have already won above official London Living Wage pay rises, Unison

members in Camden struck in October to win the rise.

The Enfield NSL workers, organised by the GMB, will strike on Friday 11 December.

GMB members working for NSL in Brighton and Hove are also fighting for better pay and will strike for six days on 5, 6, 11, 12, 19 and 20 December.

RMT Women: 100 years of fighting for equality

**Tuesday 15 December, 4.30pm, open to all
Kitchen, 73-81 Southwark Bridge Road, SE1 ONQ
bit.ly/RMTWomen**

RMT cleaners protest at 3pm: bit.ly/Interserve



Solidarity

No 386
2 December
2015

30p/80p

Junior doctors: battle is not over

By Gemma Short

A strike by junior doctors planned for Tuesday 1 December was called off at the last minute when the British Medical Association (BMA), NHS bosses and Department for Health ministers came to an agreement at the end of talks.

New contracts for junior doctors will not now be imposed and negotiations will be reopened. Crucially, the danger of the BMA needing to rebalot if new negotiations are not satisfactory has been averted. The agreement allows the BMA to take action up to 13 January using their current ballot mandate.

NHS bosses and government ministers have effectively agreed to ignore the law whereby unions must take their first action under a ballot within 27 days of the ballot ending. This is an important precedent.

Reaction to the agreement among doctors has so far been mixed. Given the level of mobilisation and the

BMA's position of strength, some are dismayed that strikes have been postponed just for talks. On the other hand, given how rigidly unwilling the government has been to concede anything to doctors thus far, many doctors will feel buoyed up by the agreement.

WINS

One junior doctor told *Solidarity*, "It's really hard to say who comes out of this better."

"The statement that has been released appears to have some clear wins for Junior Doctors, but other bits that are more alarming [including the BMA conceding the need for Hunt's 'Seven day NHS']. It will take time to unpick."

Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt made clear his contempt for junior doctors and the BMA in announcing the agreement on Twitter. Hunt said "Victory for common sense. Strike shouldn't have been called without talking to the government first but great for 7-day services." It

was the government who were not attending talks, Jeremy, not the BMA! Some doctors feel the government has played a dirty but clever trick, refusing to negotiate until the last minute, then being able to claim victory and set Hunt up to play the hero in the press conference.

Patients and doctors should be very hacked off with the government. Most operations and clinic appointments will still be cancelled on 1 December, yet the government was perfectly capable of making a much earlier agreement which could have averted disruption.

DECISIONS

So far decisions about the dispute have been controlled by the junior doctors' committee of the BMA, rather than the main BMA council.

This is good, and the new negotiations and decisions about them should continue to be conducted by the junior doctors' committee, making sure regular and in-



Junior doctors have organised several protests across the country

formative reports are made to the membership about the negotiations.

While strikes are postponed, doctors and their supporters need to continue mobilising and not allow

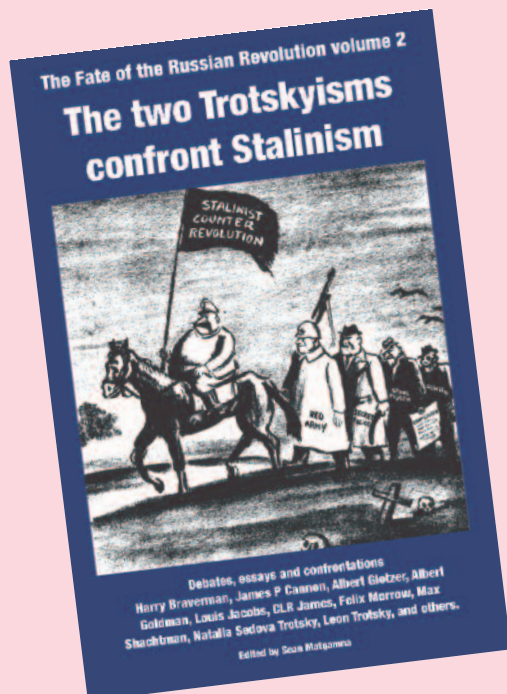
momentum to stall.

Junior doctors in London have called a demonstration for Friday 4 December to urge the BMA on in negotiations and remind the govern-

ment that they are fighting for a fair and safe contract and for the future of the NHS.

• 4 December demonstration: bit.ly/DocsProtest

'Tis the season for Marxism



Learn about the history of Trotskyism for £25

We have now sold out of copies of *The fate of the Russian Revolution: The two Trotskyisms confront Stalinism*, but fear not, a second edition of the volume will be going to print this week. Until 19 December you can buy both volume 1 and 2 of *The fate of the Russian Revolution* for £25 (including postage) and you'll get a study guide too. Make sure to buy yours now!

Why not buy your socialist friends and family books for Christmas this year? We are doing offers on a whole range of our books, pamphlets and publications until 19 December, we'll even gift wrap them for you!

The (other) history of American Trotskyism

The fate of the Russian Revolution: The two Trotskyisms confront Stalinism plus *In an era of wars and revolutions: American socialist cartoons* and a selection of our pull-outs for £25 (including postage).

**All of our books for £40
Any four books for £35
Any two books for £10**

Choose from: *The fate of the Russian Revolution* volume 1 and 2 (volume 2 counts for two choices), *Class against class: The Miners' Strike*, *In an era of wars and revolutions: American socialist cartoons*, *Gramsci in context*, and *Working class politics and Anarchism*.

History of British workers' struggle

Class against class: The Miners' Strike, *Workers against slavery* plus a selection of pull-outs about The 1926 General Strike, Red Clydeside, and other struggles from British labour history. £10 inc postage.

Introduction to Marxism

How solidarity can change the world, *Marxist ideas to turn the tide*, *Marx's telescope*, *When workers rise*, and a year's subscription to *Solidarity*. £20 including postage.

Buy online and see more offers at www.workersliberty.org/xmasoffers